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ABSTRACT

This guide contains procedures that were devised for use by parents of primary and intermediate grade children who were several years behind in their reading. Topics discussed in the guide's eight chapters are: how to arrange a time and place for reading at home, how to select suitable books for the child to learn from, how to help the child be an independent reader, how to understand the kinds of mistakes children make, how to use praise to help the child, how to help the child correct mistakes, how to check on the child's reading progress, and how parents can check their own tutoring skills. (FL)

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Remedial Reading at Home

Helping You to Help Your Child

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This booklet has been prepared to accompany four video films entitled "Helping You to Help Your Child" screened by **South Pacific Television,** July 1979, and funded by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

These films were produced by **Bill Cole** at the **University of Auckland's Audio-Visual Centre** and can be hired by schools and parent-teacher organizations from NZCER's Test and Book Sales Service, P.O. Box 3237, Wellington.

Note:
The procedures in this booklet have been devised to assist parents of primary and intermediate children who are several years behind in their reading. The procedures are not intended to be used in teaching younger children who are learning to read in a regular school reading programme.

1. How to Arrange a Time and Place for Reading at Home

Children do not enjoy the experience of learning to read if they are not successful. They may be embarrassed to read in front of anyone because they fear their mistakes will be criticized or their lack of skill shown up. Yet if we are to help them we have to know just what kind of mistakes are holding them back. It is therefore important that we "see" and "hear" them as they learn to read. It may take a great deal of time and patience to get children to sit down to read a book, and to forget their fear of being wrong, or of being criticized. As a parent you need to remember to praise and support your child for trying, and not to convey disapproval or annoyance when mistakes are made.

Here are some important suggestions about finding a time and place to help your child read.

1. Keep the sessions *short* and frequent. It is better to set aside *ten minutes* three or four times a week than to arrange one 30-40 minute session per week. At the beginning, ten minutes may be more than enough to read 50 words. (See section 2 on how to select a suitable book).

2. Try to choose a time when children are *not* already engaged in a favourite activity. Don't drag them away from an important T.V. programme or from a game with friends. It may be a good idea to offer a few minutes extra before bedtime for practising reading.

3. Try to anticipate and avoid possible interruptions to this session. Ask another child to answer the phone for you. Check that toddlers and other children have something to do for the next ten minutes. Instruct other children and adults not to interrupt or to listen in while you are working. Turn the T.V. volume down as much as possible, or get away from the T.V. altogether by working in another room.

4. Sit *beside* your child, either at the family dining table, or on the couch. Place the book between you. Your eyes and your child's should be on the printed page. Avoid catching children's eyes while they are trying to read. If your child always turns to you for the answer, you can discourage this by keeping your eyes on the book. Check that you have paper and pencil handy, before you start reading.

5. Let children see you are pleased to be alone with them. Make this a "special" time together. Remember to praise when your child comes when you call, or volunteers to come, even when you are not quite ready.

6. Stop the session on time. It is better to stop, when you are both enjoying it and wanting more, than to carry on beyond the ten minutes until you are both tired or bored or frustrated.

2. How to Select Suitable Books for Your Child to Learn From

Your school will be using a series of learning to read books that go from simple to difficult. This is called a graded series. Schools commonly start children on a series of illustrated "little books" of about twelve pages, with only about one sentence per page. These little books range through four levels, and are coded by colour. Teachers often send home additional little books, either at the same level or at a level below the book currently being used in the classroom.

When children are successfully reading the most difficult of the little books, they are moved on to a series of big books. These books have several different stories at about the same reading level, and are 30-40 pages long.

Ask your child's teacher to send home (if he or she has not already done so) a book at an appropriate level for you to begin working with. The first thing you can do is to check on how difficult this book is for your child. *Remember* reading should be a pleasant experience for your child. Arrange a suitable time and place using the suggestions from the previous section.

Steps in Checking on the Difficulty Level of Reading Books

1. Before you ask your child to start reading, count off 50 words from the selected book or story and note this point in the book. Find a pencil and paper, and write the date, and the name of the book or story.
2. Ask your child to sit beside you and to begin reading. Put a mark on your paper for each mistake your child makes. Mistakes may be different words read from those in the text, or they may be words left out, or words added. Count only one mistake for each text word incorrectly

read. If the child corrects the incorrect word *without* any help from you, do not count this as a mistake. Don't criticise children for making mistakes — remember we are trying to find out just how well they can read. Offer children encouragement for trying, and when they pause and seem to be stuck on a word, ask them to try the next word — and to keep on going.

3. When the 50 words have been read, stop and thank your child for reading to you, and for trying hard. He or she can now go off and play.
4. Count the number of mistakes you have recorded, from the 50 words read. Take away this number from 50, to show the *number of words read correctly*.

What does this tell you?

1. If there are more than 10 mistakes the book is too difficult for the child. You should ask for an easier book, one at a lower level. Do another check to find the number of words read correctly.
2. If there are fewer than four mistakes, the book is too easy. Books at this level are good for letting your child read for enjoyment.
3. If there are between four and ten mistakes, the book is suitable for learning to read. At this level, children will make enough mistakes for you to be able to see what their problems are, but not so many mistakes that they cannot follow the story.

3. How to Help Your Child be an Independent Reader

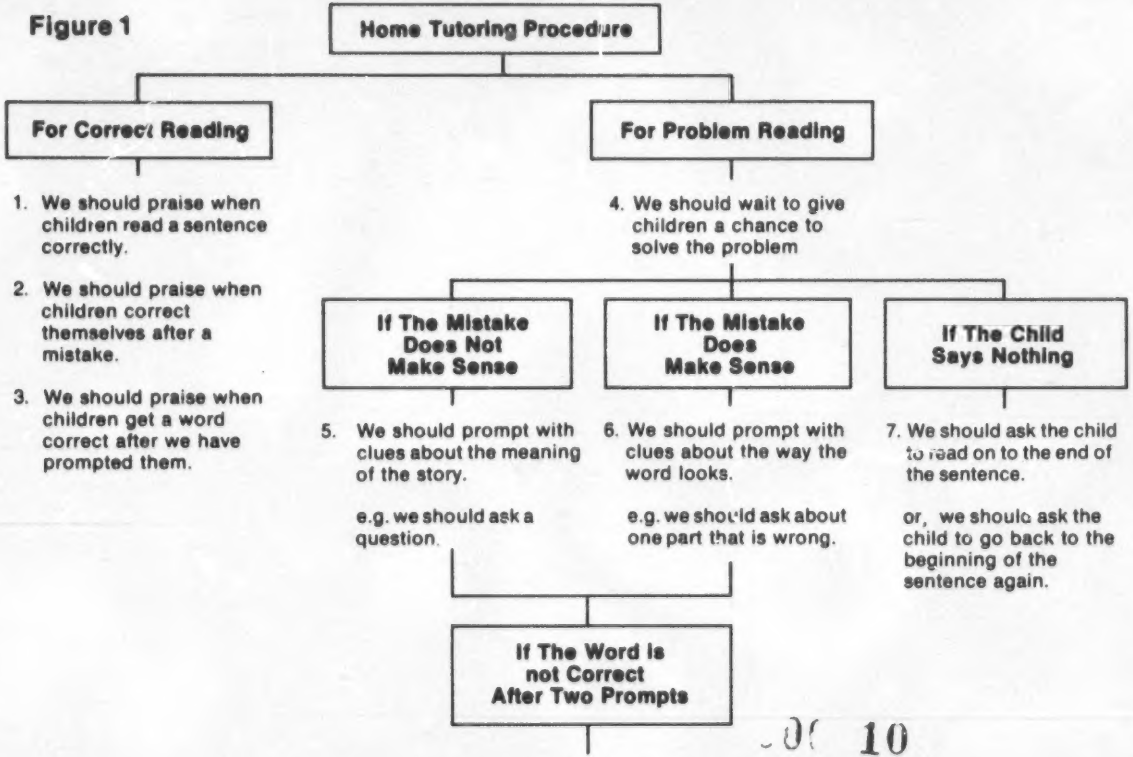
When you help children learn to read, your task is to help them to solve problems and work things out by themselves. If you are over-critical they may become too afraid to try to work things out. If you tell them all the correct words, without helping them to try by themselves, they may simply learn to depend on you completely

In figure 1 there are eight positive suggestions to help you help your child learn independent reading skills. We have two sets of suggestions: what to do when children read correctly, and what to do when children make mistakes. When children read correctly we want you to learn to praise them. You can praise them for several things: (a) when they get some words correct without any help from you, (b) when they discover without your telling them that they have made a mistake, and (c) when they get a word right after you have given them a clue, or *prompt*. Giving them a clue or prompt is more helpful to their learning than simply telling them the word, because it encourages them to try to solve for themselves what the word is.

We want you also to learn what to do when children make mistakes. There are different kinds of mistake a child can make. You will need to *practise waiting* after your child makes a mistake. When you wait there is a better chance that your child will notice the mistake, and then correct it. You will also learn to give different kinds of prompts to help your child solve the mistake, depending on what kind of mistake it is. The procedures in figure 1 will help you to get the child to correct the mistake *without* having to tell him the word.

The main thing is to keep encouraging children to try for themselves, and to praise them when they succeed.

Figure 1


Home Tutoring Procedure
For Correct Reading
For Problem Reading
1. We should praise when children read a sentence correctly.
2. We should praise when children correct themselves after a mistake.
3. We should praise when children get a word correct after we have prompted them.
4. We should wait to give children a chance to solve the problem
If The Mistake Does Not Make Sense
If The Mistake Does Make Sense
If The Child Says Nothing
5. We should prompt with clues about the meaning of the story.
e.g. we should ask a question.
6. We should prompt with clues about the way the word looks.
e.g. we should ask about one part that is wrong.
7. We should ask the child to read on to the end of the sentence.
or, we should ask the child to go back to the beginning of the sentence again.
If The Word is not Correct After Two Prompts
8. We should say: "The word is "

4. How to Understand the Kinds of Mistake Children Make

Children's mistakes contain important information. By carefully studying these mistakes you can find out something about how children are learning.

Two types of mistake

1. **Leaving out words and stopping.** These mistakes occur when children leave words out, or when children simply *stop* at a word they don't know. When most of a child's mistakes are of this sort it is difficult to know how to help the child correct them. Children who are afraid of being wrong may have learned that it is safer to say nothing when they come to an unknown word, rather than risk being criticized. Also, children may have learned that all they need to do is stop, to be told what the word is.

2. **Reading incorrect words.** These mistakes occur when children read a word, but not the correct one, or when they add a word that isn't in the story. When most of a child's mistakes are incorrect words you can be fairly sure that the child is not too frightened to "have a try". When you listen carefully to these mistakes you often find that the children are on the right track, so you can praise them for being "nearly right". Here are three examples.

Example 1.

Book: *Mother is planting seeds in the garden.*

Child: *Mother is putting seeds in the garden.*

In this example the child's mistake is quite a sensible one. Note that the word "putting" is close to the meaning of the sentence, as well as starting and ending like the word "planting." So, in this example, the mistake shows that the child understands both the meaning and the structure of the sentence, and is incorrect only in the specific meaning of the word.

Example 2.

Book: *Now the seeds are in the garden.*

Child: *Now the seeds are in the garage.*

In this example, the child's error is again fairly sensible. Both garden and garage are nouns. Both are places where the seeds could be. However, the sense of the story, from the previous sentence makes it clear that the garden is correct, and garage is not.

Example 3.

Book: *It is so hot and I am thirsty, said Father.*

Child: *It is so not and I am thirsty, said Father.*

In this example the child has given a word that looks and sounds like the correct word, but it does not fit the meaning of the sentence. It does not make sense at all.

Self-corrections

Sometimes when children make a mistake, they notice for themselves that the word they have just said doesn't make sense — and will correct it without any help, providing we leave them time to do so.

Example 4.

Book: *It is so hot today, said Father Bear.*

Child: *It is so not – hot today, said Father Bear.*

Example 5.

Book: *I would love a cup of tea.*

Child: *I would have – I would love a cup of tea.*

These self-corrections are important. They show that children are aware that what they have read is not quite correct. They show that children are on the way to independent reading.

When you listen to your child reading, you will learn to study the mistakes and to see how these mistakes are often good attempts, which come close to solving the problem word.

5. How to Use Praise to Help Your Child

Praise lets children know when they are doing the right things in learning to read. Praise also motivates them to keep on trying. When you praise children, it is important to tell them why you are pleased with them. Then they can see for themselves what they are doing is right. When children are just beginning to read, and when they have been used to a lot of embarrassment and criticism about their mistakes, you should praise often, even for quite small beginnings.

Example 6. (Figure 1 suggestion 1)

Book: *Bob and Sally carried the cups out to the garden.*

Child: *Bob and Sally carried the cups out to the garden.*

Parent: *"That's a whole sentence right. Good."*

To encourage children to be independent readers and to work things out for themselves, you should try always to notice and praise their self-corrections. Tell them you are pleased that they corrected an error without your help.

Example 7. (Figure 1 suggestion 2)

Book: *You make the tea while I finish the garden.*

Child: *You make the tea while I fix – finish the garden.*

Parent: *"That was fine. You noticed 'fix' wasn't quite right, and you corrected yourself. Good."*

Even when children have made a mistake, it is likely that their mistake will make good sense, and really fit the story. You should praise these features, so children will be encouraged to use the story to make an intelligent guess when they don't know a word.

Example 8.

Book: *Mother is planting seeds in the garden.*

Child: *Mother is putting seeds in the garden.*

Parent: *"Yes, you are nearly right. She could be putting seeds in the garden. That is a very good try."*

In this example, the parent has let the child know there is a mistake. But the parent has been positive about it. This child would not be embarrassed about being wrong, and would learn that it is worthwhile to try to work out the word from the story. Following this praise, you might then give the child a prompt to help solve the word. If the prompt is helpful and the child then corrects the word, you can give further praise.

Example 9. (Figure 1 suggestion 3)

Parent (cont.): *"The word is a bit like 'putting'. Look carefully at the beginning* (points). *See, it starts with two letters 'pl'. What could this word be, it starts with 'pl.' It's what you do with seeds."*

Child: *"Planting."*

Parent: *"Yes, that's right. You figured it out without me telling you the word. Good."*

Notice that the parent has praised the child for doing some of the work in correcting the mistake. This is one step better than just telling the word.

6. How to Help Your Child Correct Mistakes

1. The first thing to remember when you hear a child make a mistake is to *wait*. (See figure 1, suggestion 4). If the child seems to stop or hesitate at a word try to wait for five seconds. If the child makes a mistake but continues reading on, try to wait until the end of the sentence. When you wait, you are allowing the child time to notice the mistake and the chance to self correct.
2. After five seconds, or at the end of the sentence, if the child has not corrected the mistake, you can then point out the mistake. Try to do this as pleasantly and positively as you can (see example on page 13).

Suppose your child has stopped at a difficult word, and you have waited five seconds, but there is no self-correction. Ask your child to read on to the end of the sentence, or if the error is close to the end of the sentence, ask your child to go back to the beginning of the sentence (see figure 1, suggestion 7). This may help the child to correct the mistake, or to try a word that seems to make sense. Then you will be able to praise for self-correction or for being nearly correct. If the mistake is still not corrected after the child has read on or has read the sentence again or even after you have given the second prompt tell them what the word is.

Example 10. (Figure 1 suggestion 4 and 8)

Book: *They go for a picnic by the river.*

Child: *They go for a _____ (5 seconds wait).*

Parent: *Try reading on to the end* (points at *'by'*).

Child: *. . . by the river.*

Parent: *So, what's this word?* (points at *'picnic'*). *What would they be doing by the river?*

Child: (No response)

Parent: *They are having a picnic. Now read the sentence again.*

Suppose your child makes a mistake but continues reading on. You wait until the end of the sentence, and then study the mistake. If you notice that the mistake is one which makes

sense, you praise the good features of the mistake, and then prompt your child to consider more closely what the word looks and sounds like. Then if the child gets the word correct you can praise this.

Example 11. (Figure 1 suggestion 6)

Book: *They packed all the food into a big red picnic basket.*

Child: *They packed all the food into a big red picnic bag.*

Parent: *"That makes sense. Good. It is like a big picnic bag, but the word isn't bag. Have a good look at it,"* (points at *'basket'*).

Child: *Basket. Picnic basket.*

Parent: *Good.*

Suppose your child makes another mistake, but this time the word doesn't make sense at all. Again, you wait until the end of the sentence, then praise the good features of the mistake. But this time, since the word doesn't make sense, you do not bother to prompt about what the word looks or sounds like. Instead, you prompt with a clue about the meaning of the story. Then, if your child gets the word correct with the help of your prompt, you can praise this.

Example 12. (Figure 1 suggestion 5).

Book: *The fruit salad had apples, oranges, bananas and pears.*

Child: *The fruit said had apples, oranges, bananas and pears.*

Parent: *"Well, that word looks a bit like said. Something with all that fruit in it for pudding, would be fruit said?"*

Child: *They make a fruit salad.*

Parent: *"That's right, good. Now you've got it."*

When the mistake makes sense, try to prompt about what the word looks or sounds like. When the mistake *doesn't* make sense, try to prompt about the meaning of the story, or sentence. Don't expect to get this right straight away. You'll probably need quite a lot of practice. Keep the diagram of suggestions handy, to remind you what to do.

Remember, tell the child the word if the mistake hasn't been solved after two prompts.

7. How to Check on Your Child's Reading Progress

A simple way to do this is to do another check on the number of mistakes as described in section 1. Remember, the idea is to find out how well your child can read independently. *For this check, do not carry out your usual helping procedures.* Choose a book or passage that is new to your child but at the same level you have been working with. When the child stops or pauses, ask him or her to try the next word, and keep going. Do not interrupt when incorrect words are read. Simply keep a count of the number of mistakes made in the first 50 words read. Stop the session, thank your child for reading.

Check the number of mistakes, following the procedure in section 2. Compare the number of mistakes with the number you checked earlier.

If your child makes fewer than four mistakes, (not counting self-corrected mistakes) it is time to select a more challenging book. Try one a little harder. Ask the teacher for a book at the next higher level.

Remember, though, not to be disappointed when your child seems to make more mistakes again. This is to be expected with a more difficult book. With practice, and with your help, the number of words read correctly will also increase on this more difficult book.

Repeat these checks on the number of mistakes from time to time to find whether your child is ready for the next book. In between these checks, continue using all the helping procedures you have learned. You will find with repeated practice that your child is becoming more independent in reading and you are becoming a more successful reading tutor.

Table 1 Tutor Check Procedure

Word in story	Mistake	Self-Corrected?	Waited?	Told to Read on/ Re-Read?	Prompted about Meaning?	Prompted about Letters or Sounds?	Told Child the Word?	Mistakes Corrected?	Praised?
planting	putting	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
garden	garage	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
have	love	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
picnic	0	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
basket	bag	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
salad	said	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

8. How to Check on Your Tutoring Skills

If you are to be an effective reading tutor, it is important to put into practice the suggestions in Figure 1.

Here is a procedure for checking your skills as a tutor. Follow these 11 steps:

1. Rule up a Tutor Check Sheet, with ten columns like the one in Table 1.
2. Carry out your usual ten-minute reading session with your child. Try to put into practice as many as you can of the eight suggestions in figure 1.
3. During the session, record in column 1 of your Check Sheet the first few mistakes your child makes (say 5 or 6). If the mistakes are words left out, or words where your child simply stopped, record a "0" in column 2. If the mistakes are words read incorrectly, record the incorrect word in column 2. *Later, after you have finished the session, sit down and try to complete the rest of the sheet. Try to recall each error, what your child did, and what you did.*
4. If you remembered to *wait* after the mistake, enter yes in column 3.
5. If your child *corrected himself or herself* enter yes in column 4.
6. If you told your child to *read on* or to *re-read,* enter yes in column 5.
7. If you gave a *prompt about the meaning of the story,* enter yes in column 6.
8. If you gave a *prompt about what the word sounds and looks like,* enter yes in column 7.
9. If you told the child the correct word, enter yes in column 8.

10. If your child managed to correct the mistake *without* you telling the word, enter yes in column 9.

11. If you *praised* your child, for a self-correction, or for correcting a mistake with your help, enter yes in column 10.

When you have completed this sheet, you can check on how well you have carried out the tutoring procedures. Table 1 shows a completed Tutor Check Sheet.

From your Tutor Check Sheet, you can see how often you *waited* when your child made a mistake. Also you can check whether your child corrected any mistakes, and whether you remembered to praise these.

Next you can look at the mistakes where your child did not try any word at all, and check whether you asked him or her to read on or to re-read the sentence. You can check on whether you tried prompting before you told the child the word, and whether you used the two kinds of prompts correctly. If the child's mistake made sense, you should try a letter or sound prompt, and if the mistake did not make sense you should try a meaning prompt.

Most importantly you can check on how often you told your child the word, without first trying instructions and prompts, and how often you praised your child for correcting mistakes, even with your help.

Try one of these tutoring checks from time to time. Aim for high scores in column 3 (waiting) column 4 (self-corrections) column 9 (mistakes corrected) and column 10 (praise) and low score in column 8 (telling the word). Compare your scores in all these columns, to ensure you are using the suggested procedures, and improving with practice. Your gains in tutoring skills should be rewarded by gains in your child's reading and by faster progress through reading books.

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